

FLORIDA

In Trump's DC, K Street clamors for Florida-linked lobbyists

Donald Trump's Sunshine State connections are proving a bonanza for Florida's lobbyists.



"Everybody's getting an offer from a lobbying firm up here that's trying to make the Florida connection," said prominent Tallahassee attorney and lobbyist Dave Ramba. | Francis Chung/POLITICO

By **KIMBERLY LEONARD**

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A coveted resume bullet point for lobbyists is eclipsing all others at the beginning of Donald Trump's second term: a Florida zip code.

The president snapped up a bevy of top officials [from his adopted home state](#), from chief of staff Susie Wiles to Attorney General Pam Bondi. And he continues to spend [plenty of time in Florida](#) — making appearances at galas, hosting Republicans at Mar-a-Lago and signing executive orders.

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That means powerful interest groups, from giant corporations to foreign interests, are flocking to the power brokers who know the [Florida-centric administration best](#), eager for influence in the orbit of a president who's starting his second term in [a far more popular place](#) than his first — but who still remains as unpredictable as ever.

Florida firms are opening offices in Washington. Washington firms are opening up in Florida. Others are tag teaming. And the race is on for new clients and hiring up top, well-connected lobbyists. Because the state legislative session in Tallahassee lasts only 60 days, some lobbyists say adding work in Washington is easy enough to juggle.

“Everybody's getting an offer from a lobbying firm up here that's trying to make the Florida connection,” said prominent Tallahassee attorney and lobbyist Dave Ramba, speaking to POLITICO in Washington during a sold-out [Republican Party of Florida inauguration gala](#). “Anybody that's got 10, 15, 20 years in Florida politics,” he added, “their Rolodex is already filled.”

Florida seems to be everywhere in Trump's Washington. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who represented Florida in the Senate for 14 years, and national security adviser Mike Waltz, who represented a district in northeast Florida for

six years, have already been busy at work on crises in the Middle East and Ukraine. After years of getting [shut out of power](#) on Capitol Hill, key House committees now have Florida Republicans at the helm, including Rep. Brian Mast at Foreign Affairs and Mario Díaz-Balart serving as vice chair of Appropriations.

A group of people close to Trump have landed at Continental Strategy, which has been in D.C. for four years and was founded by Carlos Trujillo, a 2024 campaign surrogate who was ambassador to the Organization of American States during Trump's first term.

Some of the firm's most well-connected employees are Alex Garcia, a partner who was the Trump campaign's deputy political director and coalitions director, and Lauren DeHooghe, a policy associate who was political coordinator for Trump in battleground Michigan.

The firm also promoted Wiles' daughter, Katie Wiles, to director in the days after Trump's victory and brought on Alberto Martinez, former Rubio chief of staff, as a managing partner. Its strategic counselor Chris Kise and general counsel Jesús Suárez — who was election integrity counsel for the campaign — represented Trump in legal proceedings. Trujillo said Trump is viewed as the “hottest ticket in town.”

“It's really the roller coaster of politics,” Trujillo said. “Some people stay on for the entire ride — others jump off. For us, we never left.”

Since the election, Continental has signed on [at least 16 federal lobbying clients](#) including Google Cloud and Centene, the U.S.'s largest Medicaid managed care company. Additional clients haven't posted on the lobbying disclosure database yet, and the firm also says it signed numerous public affairs and crisis communications clients.

Trujillo said he expects to end the year among the top 10 lobbying firms in terms of revenue, citing Continental's connections not only to top officials, but also people who work in mid-level roles — relationships he said were crucial to navigating government bureaucracy.

“A lot of firms have great access to individuals,” Trujillo said. “We have great access, but we also have an exceptional understanding of the process ... and the process of how the Trump administration actually works.”

Among the other top benefactors of the incoming administration is Ballard Partners. No longer the new kid on K Street, the firm has now been in Washington since the first Trump administration, and founder Brian Ballard is a longtime Trump friend and fundraiser. It also counts top officials among its alums: Wiles, Bondi and Trent Morse, deputy director of the White House's Presidential Personnel Office responsible for recommending political appointees.

President Donald Trump snapped up a bevy of top officials from his adopted home state, like chief of staff Susie Wiles (right). | Evan Vucci/AP

“It’s the first time we have had a president elected [from the state of Florida](#),” said Justin Sayfie, a partner at Ballard who works out of Washington and Miami. “That means that there are a number of Floridians who are serving in the administration, and that means that firms with Florida ties can be helpful in the new environment in Washington.”

The firm has brought on [almost 60 new federal lobbying clients](#) since the election, including [oil giant Chevron](#), [The Walt Disney Co.](#) and [Jeff Bezos’ Blue Origin](#), an aerospace company and rival to Elon Musk’s SpaceX.

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Florida firm Rubin, Turnbull & Associates [is also opening an office in Washington](#) and hired Caroline Wiles, another daughter to the chief of staff who worked on the Trump campaign, as vice president of federal affairs. Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck, [the top-earning lobbying firm in DC](#), has additionally opened an office in Florida.

Lobbyists and their clients see policy issues that have been big in Florida cropping up nationally. Trump aims to end diversity, equity and inclusion in government hiring practices? [So does Florida](#). Trump wants to ban transgender athletes from women and girls' sports? Happened in Florida almost four years ago.

“It’s been said that, where Florida goes, the rest of the country goes, whether it’s politics or policy,” said Rachel Cone, senior managing partner at the Southern Group. “So I think it is fair to assume that — especially with a lot of the leadership transitioning to D.C. — Florida policies or ways of doing things here might also transition with them. As Florida’s largest lobbying firm, we are well-positioned to help translate Florida-born policies to businesses who may be encountering them at the federal level.”

The Southern Group opened its federal lobbying arm, TSG Advocates, in Washington this year, hiring three lobbyists with more expected. It’s closing on a townhouse on the northeast side of Capitol Hill, behind the Supreme Court, with Cone saying the firm’s building a strategy for “the next 100 years.”

Lobbyists said clients are excited about potential new business but that there’s also uncertainty given the slashing and firing of the federal workforce under Musk’s DOGE. Countries want help negotiating trade deals and have questions about Trump flirting with acquiring Greenland and taking back the Panama Canal.

“There are countries out there that are really excited about this White House, because they see the president as a deal maker, and they want to get in on that action,” said Chase Kroll, founding partner of TSG Advocates who has congressional expertise after working in D.C. for 15 years. He called the firm’s Florida connections “highly marketable” with “a lot of clients coming in” and recruits wanting to join the firm.

“It’s incredible,” Kroll said of the relationships. “It’s sort of obnoxious to do the name-dropping game, but you know who all the people are from Florida who run the White House, run State ... All of these things are just lining up for us to help clients.”

Numerous firms partied it up in D.C. on inauguration weekend. Continental had a “Florida 47” party at the Jefferson, which included guests like Rubio, Wiles, Sen. Rick Scott (R-Fla.), multiple ambassador nominees and House Speaker Mike Johnson. Ballard rented out Mastro’s Steakhouse and drew Rubio and other top officials.

BGR Group had an inauguration lunch for clients at the Hay Adams and held a nighttime reception at Georgetown hotspot Cafe Milano. The Southern Group’s party, hosted at client Siemens’ offices, likewise included numerous ambassadors and Florida legislators as well as Diaz-Balart and Rep. Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick (D-Fla.).

“The snow was coming down as we were having a good time,” Cone said. “They had these big glass walls in their offices, so you could get a really good view of it. For Floridians, that was kind of a unique experience.” (Just days later, in perhaps a natural sign of the new D.C. connections, those Floridians [would see a rare snowstorm](#) blanketing Tallahassee.)

Capital City Consulting owner and founder Nick Iarossi — who is based in Tallahassee and just [expanded into Washington](#) as managing director of BGR Group — said last week he was sitting in the lobby of the West Wing with clients ahead of meetings and bumped into several senior officials from Florida, including Bondi.

“It was almost like you picked up Florida and placed it in the White House,” he said, adding that it was a “wild” experience but also that Florida was “getting its due.”

“For a long time, we’ve been the really large state that was generally ignored in Washington from a power structure perspective,” he said, “and now it’s like we took all the years that we were the stepchild in Washington, D.C. and all at

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once snapped the pendulum back in a way that now we are, as a state, by far
the nucleus of power.”

Kimberly Leonard reported from Washington and Miami.

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